The Parfit Gentyl Knight in Business

THE BOOK OF BUSINESS ETIQUETTE. Anonymous. Doubleday, Page & Co.
THE BOOK OF LETTERS. By Mary Owens Crowther. Doubleday, Page & Co.
BUSINESS LETTER PRACTICE. By John B. Opdyke. Isaac Pitman and Sons.

THE anonymous author of "The Book of Business Etiquette" says: "The business man is the national hero of America, as native to the soil and as typical of the country as baseball or Broadway or big advertising." Our traditional worship of the plain people and the difficulties of pioneer life made us neglectful of the social amenities. The author puts it succinctly: "The Pilgrim Father was too busy learning how to bring a living from the forbidding rocks of New England with one hand while he fought off Indians with the other to give much time to tea parties and luncheons." Times have changed. "Material progress has raced so far ahead of mental and spiritual progress that the world itself is a good many years in advance of the people in it." Hence there is a greater need of courtesy to-day than ever before. "Too many people use sledge hammers when tack hammers would do just as well." The author gives us a tactful word of advice for many specific situations which arise in the modern business world, and furnishes the general rules to guide us. The most useful chapters deal with, "telephones," and with "traveling and selling." The chapter on the "Business of Writing" says: 'Legal phraseology should be restricted to the profession to which it belongs. It is perfectly possible to express oneself clearly in the language of conversation (which is also the language of business) without burying the meaning in tiresome verbiage." A good summary of the demands of courtesy is that, "No one need ever apologize when he has done or given his best."

In "The Book of Letters," Mrs. Crowther firmly acknowledges that business is the predominant gesture of this age. Nearly half of her book deals directly with business letters. She says: "Most of our letters in these days relate to business affairs or to social affairs that, as far as personality is concerned, might as well be business." Mrs. Crowther quotes many genial letters of famous men. However, she is rather averse to too pretentious a style. She feels that there are limits to what most of us can say in a letter. In particular she scoffs at "sales letters that would sell electric fans to Esquimaux or ice skates to Hawaiians." If there are such letters, she believes them to be the outpourings of genius and she says: "The average letter writer, trying to be a genius, deludes only himself—he just becomes queer, he takes to unusual words, constructions and arrangements. Mrs. Crowther covers the subject of correspondence very thoroughly. She has also a chapter on "Telegrams," which is the result of very careful verification of forms and practices. No necessary detail of the subject of letter writing has escaped her. She has written a valuable book for general use.

John B. Opdyke is a high priest of the cult of Big Business. He is the head of the Business Letter Service. He has had experience in conducting advertising campaigns and in teaching. He has the confidence of several large scale advertisers who have been willing to assist him. Joseph H. Appel, Roger W. Babson, Louis H. Liggett and Charles H. Sabin have contributed to a Symposium on Business Letter Writing. Mr. Appel says: "Lamented as a lost art, letter writing began to come back into our lives with the advent of stenography, the typewriter and the multigraph. It came back in a new form, as an aid to business. The very ease with which letters are now written mechanically makes their contents mechanical. In business organizations the job of writing letters is often given to any one who can operate a typewriter—until the letters become too bad; then the boss takes a hand and he makes a worse mess of it."

Mr. Opdyke's book tries to correct this era in a constructive way. He does much more than tell what to avoid. His book is full of examples of the best modern business letters. They show that the business world is levying a contribution from art and literature to further salesmanship. Modern business men seem to quote frequently from Longuins, Omar Khayyam and Thoreau. Mr. Opdyke tries to attain to Mr. Louis H. Liggett's counsel of perfection, which is that "Letters are the person in print." There is much ginger in his own style. He says: "It is easy to say too little and thus harass. It is easy to say too much, and thus confuse. If you use half an egg as a nest egg, you tantalize the hen. If you use two eggs, you make her suspicious. If you use one, you are just sufficiently comprehensive in your plan to produce conclusions with her." Mr. Opdyke's book contains a list of abbreviations, a business letter lexicon, and articles for study and dictation. It is to be commended for having a good index.

Outstanding Problems of the Day

ROBINSON CRUSOE, SOCIAL ENGINEER. By Henry E. Jackson. E. P. Dutton & Co.
AMERICA A FAMILY MATTER. By Charles W. Gould. Charles Scribner's Sons.
HORNY HANDS AND HAMPERED ELBOWS. By Whiting Williams. Charles Scribner's Sons.
INDUSTRIAL REVIVAL IN SOVIET RUSSIA. By A. A. Heller. Thomas Seltzer.
RURAL SOCIOLOGY. By John Morris Gillette. The Macmillan Company.
HISTORY OF TRADE UNIONISM IN THE UNITED STATES. By Selig Perlman. The Macmillan Company.
EDUCATION IN A DEMOCRACY. By Dallas Lore Sharp. Houghton Mifflin Company.

BOOKS on social and economic questions continue to pour forth in unabated profusion—vigorous and vitriolic challenges to the age, conservative discourses on industrial relations, textbooks on the sociology of town and country, essays on educational reform and treatises on trade unionism and on Russian Communism. All of these tendencies are exemplified in the various books under review, which touch from many points of view upon some of the outstanding social problems of the day.

In some respects the most original, and therefore the most striking, volume in the group is Henry E. Jackson's book entitled "Robinson Crusoe, Social Engineer." Most of us are inclined to look upon "Robinson Crusoe" as an absorbing and fabulous romance more valuable for children than for adults; but Mr. Jackson's startling thesis is that it is not only a profound piece of work but that it offers the solution of twentieth century industrial problems. At first though one would be inclined to scoff at such a view as worse than ludicrous; yet the author makes his contention at least plausible and establishes an ingenuous yet genuine connection between the conditions of Crusoe's island and of present day America. For, in the face of almost insuperable difficulties, Crusoe succeeded because he was free and was urged onward by no external impulse; because he was self-confident rather than slavish, and had the opportunity to give scope to his inherent powers. In the same way the laborers of to-day may accomplish the seemingly impossible if they are released from artificial fetters; if their dammed up natural powers are given a normal outlet; if the method of freedom rather than of force becomes generally applicable in industry, and if each man is encouraged to take a vital interest in the enterprise he serves rather than to act as a mere automaton.

A commoner method than the one employed by Mr. Jackson is that of historical analogy—the method whereby we attempt to arrive at an understanding of the present through a study of the past. Such is the course pursued by Charles W. Gould in his book on "America a Family Matter." Strange to say, the family matter dealt with by the author seems at first glance to have more to do with the ancient Egyptians, the Romans and the Greeks than with modern peoples, for the volume is devoted primarily to a consideration of the causes of intellectual degeneration in the ancient world. The author reaches the conclusion that the decline in intelligence in each case was due to the mingling of races, and that, accordingly, present day America must beware of diluting its racial stock. However, in spite of all the ex-

Continued on Following Page.